

Scales of the Night (Mga kaliskis ng gabi): A Filipino Myth

Bayito¹ had a strong fascination with the moon, peering his long and scaly snout just enough every night, so that his single, huge, algae green eye² could take in the beautiful light, without the film of the warm island water manipulating it.³ “I could only wish to be as beautiful and mesmerizing as you, queen of the night, but I am merely an ugly crocodile,” Bayito quietly says to himself, while still fully admiring the moon. The more he stared at it, Bayito would reveal more of his body from the cover of the water, almost to the point of full exposure, but before his tail could ascend above the waterline, Bayito was quickly swiped underwater. As he becomes submerged, Bayito flails in a panic, “could it be an evil spirit,” he thought to himself and whips around, fully prepared to attack, but it is not a threat, as he is merely faced with his mentor and superior, Dario⁴. “How many times have I warned you about the danger of exposing yourself to those of the surface,” Dario scolds Bayito. “I don’t know what it is, but everytime I look at the night sky, it’s like I can feel the moon calling to me, like I need to join her in the sky, so that she can heal my eye” Bayito responds. Dario had heard every single one of Bayito’s thoughts about the moon for years, but never thought that he’d hear something like this; this was his breaking point. “I can’t look out for you forever Bayito! You were almost completely exposed because of this outrageous thought! You need to stop imagining such ridiculous things and come back to reality; your eye is gone and there’s *nothing* that *anyone* can do to fix it,”

¹ Combination of the names Bayani (Hero) and Agapito (Sweetheart)

² Description of a crocodile in the region of the Philippines

³ Referring to the warm waters of the Philippines

⁴ Combination of the names Datu (Chief) and Gregorio (Watchful/Alert)

Dario exclaims in a loud and furious manner. Bayito, now filled with both rage and frustration, shudders and swims away in a flash, shoving past Dario. “I’m just trying to protect you; our job of fighting evil spirits is so dangerous, I let you get hurt... I’m only hard on you because I don’t want to see you get hurt ever again,” Dario shouts, hoping Bayito would hear some of it as he disappeared into the night. “Why can’t anyone else see what I see? Am I really just a fool,” Bayito quietly cries to the moon, as he begins to fall into a deep slumber.

Just as the sun begins to rise, Bayito awakes from his sleep and goes for a simple morning swim. As he approaches an alcove, Bayito runs into a spirit⁵. “Leave now and I will bring you no harm,” Bayito states with an aggressive and serious tone towards the spirit. “You’ve mistaken my presence here today, Bayito,” the spirit softly said to Bayito, with slight concern in his voice. “How do you know my name,” Bayito asks, now with concern in his voice as well. “Let me introduce myself; my name is Angelo⁶, and Lady Mayari⁷ has sent me here to ask for your help,” Angelo responds. “And who is this Lady Mayari,” Bayito asks, still trying to figure out the situation. “I thought you would know her, since you speak with her almost every night,” Angelo replies. After hearing that, Bayito finally realizes who the spirit is talking about; “Are you telling me that the moon, the queen of the night, is asking for me,” Bayito asks the spirit, while in shock. “That’s right Bayito and she needs your help. Right now, she is in the middle of a family war and all she wants is out, but her siblings won’t let her leave, so she has asked me to come here and request that you help her escape the dangerous battle,” Angelo reports. “I knew she was real,” Bayito thought to himself, before responding, “Why would she ask for help from an ugly old crocodile such as myself?” “Lady Mayari listens to you every night; it is your kind words that encouraged her to want to leave the perilous battle; you mean everything to her,”

⁵ Entities that crocodiles would defeat to keep humans safe

⁶ A traditional male Filipino name meaning ‘Messenger’

⁷ Goddess of the moon, daughter of Bathala, King of the Gods, according to Philippine Mythology

Angelo says. After hearing that, Bayito is filled with an overwhelming amount of gratitude and agrees to help Mayari. “Alright, meet me back here tonight, when Lady Mayari is at her highest and brightest point, so that we may try to extract her from the war,” Angelo explains, as he starts to disappear into the darkness of the cave. “I will return tonight and aid you, my queen of the night sky, you can be sure of it,” Bayito whispers as he returns home.

As it became nightfall, Bayito would begin to make his way to the alcove, just as the spirit had instructed him, but on his way there, he bumps into Dario. “Where are you going this late at night,” Dario nervously asks Bayito. “Why do you care? You’re probably just gonna stop me,” Bayito responds in an upset tone. “Listen Bayito, I’m sorry about last night; just know that anything I say or do is to look out for you, so if you are going to look at the moon, I’ll tag along with you and support you,” Dario confesses. Bayito is slightly taken aback by this, but trusts his master, so he lets him join. As they arrive at the alcove entrance, Bayito stops and tells Dario what he is really doing tonight. “Are you crazy?!?! How could you ever trust a spirit?!?! He’s probably just trying to trick you into facing him alone, so that he can defeat you! It seems that you are still just as reckless and careless as you were when you lost your eye to the last evil spirit,” Dario screams in an outrageous manner. “You just need to trust me on this; I can tell when a spirit is truly evil, you taught me that well, and I believe what this spirit said was true...” Bayito tries to explain, but is interrupted by Dario, “How can you believe such a thing? If she needed help, why would she ask for an ugly and broken crocodile like you?” That was Bayito’s breaking point; “I suggest you leave right now, otherwise I will strike at you with all of my might, then we’ll see who’s the ugly crocodile,” Bayito states. “That’s unlike you Bayito; you wouldn’t dare...” Dario expresses before quickly being snapped at by Bayito, “You don’t know a single thing about me! So go ahead, choose to stay and see if I will even spare your life,” Bayito

snarls toward Dario. As Dario backs off, he notices that Bayito's eye has changed into a flame red-orange and his pupil has become greatly enlarged, accompanied by thick white smoke coming from his nostrils and large claws emerging from his webbed toes.⁸ Before he leaves, Dario says one final somber thing to Bayito, "It seems you are a real crocodile; you really are cold blooded."⁹

As the mission becomes closer to starting, Angelo gives Bayito a special necklace; "This necklace was made from the stars in the sky and will transform you, allowing you to reach and make contact with Lady Mayari," Angelo explains. Filled with both nervousness and excitement, Bayito says "I will do everything I can to rescue you; I will put my life on the line, if need be; I love you Lady Mayari." Just as he finishes his statement, Bayito begins to transform into a huge serpent¹⁰ with wings and shoots out of the top of the alcove, heading straight into the night sky; "Fly to her and carry her down by your mouth! The strength of your jaw should be enough to pull her out of the sky," Angelo exclaims. Bayito does exactly as Angelo instructed and successfully carries Lady Mayari down to Earth. As he lands in the alcove, Bayito looks around for Angelo, but he is nowhere to be seen. Not being able to callout, due to Lady Mayari being held in his mouth, Bayito just stands in the middle of the alcove in silence, with nothing but the drips of water from the cave walls splashing onto the water below, but the silence wouldn't last for long, as it was finally broken by an unfamiliar voice...

"I guess I should formally introduce myself; my name is Apolaki¹¹ and I am Lady Mayari's brother. You see, our father has recently passed and he didn't choose any of his children

⁸ In Philippine Mythology, crocodiles are seen as dragons, so this description explains dragon like features

⁹ Crocodiles are a cold blooded species, which is being compared to the saying of being 'cold blooded' which means to be without emotion or pity

¹⁰ In Philippine Mythology, there was said to be a serpent who was obsessed with trying to swallow the moon

¹¹ Son of Bathala, Brother of Mayari, God of War

to take the throne, so this resulted in Mayari and I to fight for the throne. Now, Mayari is much stronger than I, so knowing I could never win against her, I decided that I needed to get rid of her, but I love my sister too much to kill her, making this a much harder task, but I finally came up with a plan that was sure to work. One night, I as I was pondering on my plan, I heard you, speaking to my sister and you were so desperate to meet her, I knew you would be the perfect one for the job; I simply wanted you to remove her from being eligible for the throne by making her a mortal on Earth,” Apolaki explains.¹² Bayito stood there, completely in shock of what he had just heard, legs trembling and tears rushing out his eye. Apolaki, not surprised by his reaction, says, “Now, release my sister from your mouth, so that I may tell her that I’ve won.” Bayito does as Apolaki says and opens his mouth, but it is not Mayari that falls out, well not all of her at least; the only thing that emerges from Bayito’s mouth is an eyeball. “What is this?!?! What have you done to my sister?!?! You weren’t supposed to hurt her, you fool! The whole reason I made this plan was to bring her no harm,” Apolaki shouts in frustration at Bayito.¹³ Realizing what he had done, Bayito fell to the ground and began to sob; he would sob so much that the single large Philippine Island would become a bunch of smaller ones, separated by his tears for Mayari.¹⁴ Clearly distraught, Apolaki had one final thing to say to Bayito, “I must return home and apologize to my sister for *your* mistake. As your punishment for hurting my sister, your name will no longer be Bayito; instead, you will be known as Hadila¹⁵, remain in this monstress form, and you will forever be known as the most evil spirit, who destroyed the moon.”

¹² In Philippine Mythology, Apolaki struck Mayari in the eye

¹³ Apolaki would feel guilty about hurting Mayari, so he does care for her

¹⁴ The Philippines is made of many islands separated by bodies of water

¹⁵ Combination of Hayden (Heathen) and Dakila (Big)

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